VISIT…

# 2Kold

## Brings it

In the second issue of Bomb Alert we had the pleasure of interviewing several members of the most notorious and prolific crew London has ever seen: DDS. This time around we managed to meet up with one of its most prominent members who has been active during some of the most exciting times in London's underground graffiti scene. His name is 2KOLD.

How many years have you been involved with graffiti?
I was into graf before I started actually writing. When we were seven or eight we were all into breakdancing. I knew about graf but I never did anything. I didn't start painting until I was about 15, so I have been involved properly for about 12 years.

So when was the first time you actually saw graffiti?
My middle school backed on to tracks; my first memory was seeing a BR run pass with a burner and character on it.

Who or what made you actually start doing graf?
My mate ODISIE. We use to skateboard together and then he started writing. He was the one who got me into it. We started off doing things like dubs on garages, dubs in my school, all that kind of shit.
When I started going to college, I met TUBZ and THOR who were in MTS. Once I met them, I got into proper graf. By that time I had already been writing for about a year, but not really got anywhere with it. In 1993 I did my first train in Morden. That's when I count it from, 1993 when I done my first train yard.

Your name, how did you come up with it?
I came up with 2KOLD because everyone at the time was using words like "oh that's too cold, look what he done to you, that's dark" and generally using it to describe things that were bad or dark, so I thought boom there you go, that was when the name 2KOLD was born! But also in a funny way, I was bored with writing my old name, bored of the letters and I thought I got the right to write something that means "I am heavy now", you know what I mean? In the old days, a lot of tags had a meanings like "superkool", it was like an extension of the ego. People lost that shit now, a lot of people don't think like that.

Do you feel 2KOLD is an extension of your ego?
I wouldn't have written it before, but I feel like I have got to a level with my graf where I can say I'm good at it now.

So what were your early influences, style wise?
In the early days I was influenced by people like FUME, AGRO, TEACH to a certain extent - that whole MTS Style.

When did MTS start?
MTS started around the same time as DDS in the early 90's. It was a West crew. GRAND 37 gave the name to SANE and he started it. The MTS style was simple letters, simple fills. But because a lot of MTS members were in DDS, eventually the crews merged, especially when a lot of the original MTS lot stopped writing. MTS is still going, a few people put it up; I still put it up.

What about a mentor? Did you have one?
Yeah, FUME schooled me on yards; schooled me on clocking a yard, cutting fences, what to look out for, which yards to do. All that was FUME. He was my main partner in crime. That whole time was a mad time because for me it was basically all focused around TEACH and his house. From that house so much graf got done it was unbelievable. It was fucking sick. That's where TAKE and COS got schooled, I remember when ZONK was a young kid and he used to come around TEACH'S house before he was a writer and we used to blaze fat zoots and get ready for yards.
But I think that whole train mentality was because mans like SHU and the older heads were influencing FUME and TEACH, wanting to carry on doing trains even after they put the fences up in the early 90's. It was like the new train movement but with old heads who didn't want to stop just because it got a bit harder.
So basically it was like a die hard attitude: I remember the one thing that FUME said to me "You don't start writing to stop, you will always be a writer, otherwise don't bother". That's the one thing I remember FUME saying and it has always stuck in my head.

So from what you say, it sounded like TEACH's house was a school turning out a lot of future bombers of London.
It was like a youth club, not even a school. We all used to turn up there, anytime of night. 5:00am in the morning

whatever time of day it was, TEACH's house was somewhere you could go. It was a cotch. That house was responsible for more graf than any other premises in London.
He had a yard around the back of his house, so we used to have a shortcut, down the stairs, up a lamp post, through an alley and boom you're there, so we didn't even have to go on street because the local police all knew us. That yard got smashed regularly, on Christmas it always got demolished! It was like a 48 hour session, with different groups of people arriving and leaving through Christmas day. In 1997, when SARI was over, we had shifts going in and out of that place.

Was that the main yard you lot did?
No, we went all over - a lot of stuff happened in G, but I missed out on some of those missions.
When I first started hanging around with MTS, I wasn't accepted by everyone in the crew straight away, so I wasn't being taken to certain yards cos they were strictly no toys allowed. So when I wasn't out with them, I used to paint my local plots - did a few trains with SEL TSM. He used to smash South Harrow when the Pics used to lay up. We did all the West London yards together a few times.

So when you say you weren't accepted straight away and taken to certain places, was that part of the crew hierachy? You were a new comer and had to gain their respect?
Yeah definitely. There was always an element of that and to me that's important, that's how you learn shit and earn your place. It's not like now, where everyone goes yard and paints together even when you are a toy. I had to check the yard out 'nuff times and go in there usually with FUME to have a look. FUME was known for being "the fence cutter".
After a year or two, TAKE and COS came on the scene and when they come on, I was a bit older than them so it was like they replaced where I was and I "moved up". Sometimes I couldn't go on a mission because there was no space in the car or we were too fucked.
In TEACH's house there was a green couch, everyone knew about the green couch mate, its famous...
So many people sweated it out on the couch, even when he was out painting.

How much damage was getting done around 93-95?
A lot was getting done, but it was getting done by a handful of writers. It was mainly us, some of the older lot - FUEL and that. I remember GOBS, PUZLA and ALIEN: bombers from North London. But we had the yards to ourselves. We went everywhere and had wholecars, end-to-ends and panels running. G was the special yard though, that place has a lot of history and so many stories connected to it, like it was the place where that HONKY top-to-bottom was done. South Harrow got hurt: it was a summertime yard, we went in the day and spent hours in there. This was until LU hid a camera in the end light and we all got nicked after. A lot of MTS got caught and charged for that.

Was that your first brush with BTP?
My first major contact with BTP was when I got pulled at Barons Court station by one of them. He knew I looked worried about something and he was like "You alright son? You got anything on you that you shouldn't have?". As it was the first time I was getting grilled by police, I didn't know how to really lie! He searched me and found my pen, and a scratcher. He let me go and I thought that would be the last of it. Two weeks later, 7:00am in the morning there's a buzz on my door. My dad opened the door and there was two PCs looking to raid my house.

What in your opinion was the best era for graffiti in London?
For painting trains, I guess the late 80's and early 90's. But the best time since I have been painting was from 2000 to 2003, because we smashed it. We had the whole system killed with insides, bombing, wholecars and LU just kept running them. At the time LU was handing management over to PPP so they really

didn't give a shit about graf on trains. That's why all that shit happened, it also coincided with all the new writers getting onto it. People like TOX. So because of the increased numbers LU couldn't cope! But by the end of 2003 they got their act together and buffed everything. I had never seen anything like it. When I first painted trains, they used to run them in the morning and then it would head straight to the buff, so the whole system looked clean.

Do you still rack paint?

I stopped racking mostly in 2002 because by then we started buying paint from some fella! From that point, my graf has got much better.

Now that most people buy paint and there is paint made for writers, do you think that Graf has lost something fundamental to its culture, lost an edge? Or is it pure evolution?

Yeah definitely, an element has gone from graf now, that's how I learnt my geography of London! I used to go racking with TUBZ - he took me to mad tucked away places for Auto Ks in South-East London. We use to keep our racking plots secret, that was almost as important as yards. You kept your plots for Beltons and Auto Ks to yourself, plots were held down. You had to know who was in the B&Q the week before otherwise you were getting spun. I remember racking with SPOE was like a competition, it was always "Who's gonna rack the most, who's gonna get that Red Japlac". Racking is like a little map learning excercise!

Did you find it was almost like a bonding experience, meeting people and going racking with them?

Definitely! I linked all sorts of people, just to rack. There was a stage I went racking with BLINK out to bumpkin sides, we were taking liberties and kept going back into the shops to get every last can out of there. Racking is or was a whole part of the graf culture.

What does riding the lines mean to you?

Basically, if you are not on the lines then you don't have that connection. It's like you can sit at home, get in a car, drive to a yard and do a train, but then so what? What do you know about what's really going on? Where's the connection: you ain't a true writer. Even though we are in a dead time now in London, I'm still out there, I still know who's been about from bombing, scratchings. There's a new generation of writers who just drive to yards and that's all they do; no bombing, no insides. Riding the line is the juice, if you're a train writer, it's the essence. Then there's also the nightbuses...

How much travelling abroad you done? What's your view on Graf abroad?

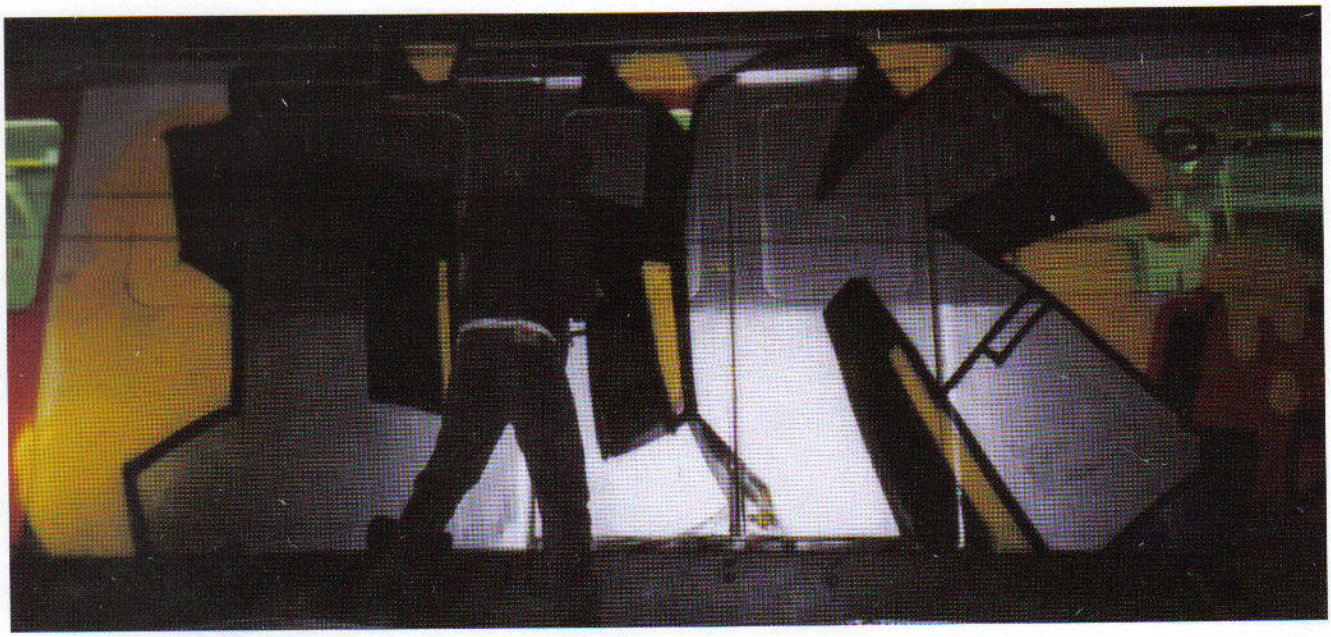
The crew went to a European country once, but we never got to paint. Some of them had been there before and ran into some trouble with the 5-0 out there. On the first day we smashed raking the food and drink. Second day we visited a big central art shop in the city and the Buntz got rinsed, Me and L**** ended up in their stock room and was helping ourselves, going on proper bait.

We then ended up going to a bumpkin DIY shop, the paint they had in there was like Beltons. We filled up a shopping trolley full of paint, took it out to the garden centre and dumped it into a bin next to the fence. We came back later that night and cut the fence and took the paint. But on the way back home we got pulled by police. They knew we had raised the paint, but just couldn't work out how we done it, so they confiscated it, took our passports and also the address of the guy we were staying with.

We didn't think they were that thorough, but the whole of the next day they had us under surveillance, but we didn't know so we just carried on with our business. That night, all we were thinking was yards. It was all "Yeah wholecars tonight... How we gonna get to yard tonight? Yeah, lets go and nick some bikes!". Literally went out the flat, round the corner and started ripping the bikes off the railings outside. We took five bikes back to the house, started breaking them down, throwing off mudguards, spraying them - it was mad. The whole flat was full of fucking bikes. Once outside we started to cycle. I was in front, we were 10 yards round the corner and then sccreetch! All you could see was rad cars pulling up everywhere and "Halt! Halt!". I see someone get tackled behind, I see next man coming after me. I thought "Shit I'm off!" - I was pedalling hard to get away, but the bike was in low gear so I was straining and not getting anywhere. I got rugby tackled off the bike: as soon as I hit the ground I was cuffed straight away; it was the fasteset cuffing I have had in my life! Next thing I know I am in the rad car, everyone was nicked. That was our night over!

So what happened next?

We went to the police station and started causing mayhem there. They were trying to take our statements and we just kept changing our stories. We were taking liberties but they took us to the central jailhouse and slung us in cells sharing with all mad crims and border jumpers. Four of us were together and the other one, because he was 21, was put in an adult cell. We were held there for four days with one sandwich a day. They brought us this nasty tasting coffee with bromine that made you feel ill. We were starving, plus we were getting interviewed everyday. The screws called us the "London Posse". Everyday we took turns to squash up high against the cell window, shouting out the window. The cells were all overlooking the court yard so we took it turn everyday to gun them and



anyone else we could see. Every time a female officer went past, we would all shout "Blazen" - which means "Shiners" in German; just being cunts. After four days we were transferred to a proper prison, in a proper prison bus too. By this time I was starting to frob, thinking "shit, how long are they going to keep us?". They didn't tell us how long we were in for. Altogether they kept us for eight days, but in the end only three of us were let out: they kept the other two inside for three weeks longer. I felt bad leaving them behind, but they could look after themselves in there - it wasn't bad really. In the end they weren't allowed out until they paid for a lawyer to go court to get them released. They weren't even charged in the end.

That's harsh! What are your thoughts on the London train scene right now? Do you think the recent £500 to grass a writer campaign has worked?

Right now, the underground's sort of dead, shit's terrible. The whole thing about not running underground trains is killing it. The increased security is also having an effect. Like I said, before they used to run the train first thing in the morning and then take it out of service. LU have now gone that step further by running it straight to the buff. It's a nail in the coffin, but it will calm down again... The only good thing to come out of the clampdown is that it has put a lot of the fly-by-night toys off and they have stopped writing. Also, there was too many dickheads showing no respect to the yards and other writers by doing as much shit as they can out of one yard and hotting it up for everyone.

## 'If I was to stop doing graf now, it would be like someone ripped my heart out'

So do you think you your attitude to graf has mellowed as you have got older?

No, in fact it has intensified. We have become more organised in the way we go and paint yard - its more of a millitary excercise. Also, now its more serious because we are older, the consequences greater. I take it more seriously and make all the missions count because chances to paint tubes are getting less and less. I mean back in the day we always used to sit in the train first and burn a zoot before painting it. I don't want graf to head that way [more security] but I think it will out of necessity. In the end its about money for LU. If they get the funding, they will fight graf, but if they don't they won't be able to afford the security or the buffing and then shit will happen. One thing will lead to another: once you see your train running, your insides running, its like a magic potion. It will start to spread and multiply.

So you see yourself around in 10 years time?

Yeah, I can't really give up graf, its not like an option. Once you come a certain distance with something, you have to love it, it's given me so much in like I've learnt how to be an artist, the experiences I've had, people I met... It's all kinda gone into one now; fused into my personality, shaped my character. If I was to stop doing graf now, it would be like someone ripped my heart out, I wouldn't be the same person, I wouldn't feel the same. I still feel intense about graffiti but just a bit more controlled with it now.

What are your plans for 2005?

Make some money, so that I can bring out some T-shirts, take it to another level really.

Any last words?

Keep your house clean, do as much as you can while you are young and remember graf is art that the system is trying to destroy. They can't make money out of us and it's another symbol of people saying "We're not having it, we ain't an advertsing company but we're doing what we want to do so fuck you". In years to come, people will look back at graf whether its still around or not and ask how they could have persecuted people for painting colourful art on a train?! You know what I mean? Its makes me sick how they can put advertising all over the place in your face, I mean we don't ask for this advertising on our faces. There is nothing scary about a full colour wholecar is there: it's a beautiful thing. I mean bombing is messy, but graf has a natural order of things. The bombing will eventually change to a piece if you leave it, people will naturally want to make it nice. They keep wanting to crush it but it keeps jumping out from under their hands. I mean look how long this youth culture has been going? It's being going on for nearly 40 years and it's still strong. It's bigger than the Hippies. It's the biggest youth culture ever and it hasn't even reached it's full potential yet!

# Ano

# LAST DEFIANT STAND

We met up with Ano in a North London pub where we pumped him with beer and he started to get rowdy.

So how would you describe your earliest stuff? Was it in a London style?

Nah, nothing. I don't like all that "London this" or "European style" - it's bullshit. I like simple letters, that's what I was trying to do. Maybe when I was at home I would have drawn some wildstyles just to see what you could do and that. You always wanna be different to other people.

When I was going to hall of fames I remember seeing pieces by ELK where he'd done thick lines and it was clean as fuck. So I thought that I wanted to do fat clean outlines - nice clean sharp strong lines.

So let's talk a bit more about your writing partnership with DODO: did he school you up on yards?

He showed me what I had to see about a yard. I was with him - he went yard and I went with him. The first train I done with him he done a one man window-down wholecar in silver. OK, people wouldn't like it cos it was big long letters but it's a one man widow-down wholecar - quick! I done a panel in the same time and I was like 'fuck me!' that's the business. That was only the second time I met the geezah.

After the first yard mission did you sense the difference between walls and yards?

It blew me away. To stand at a wall pottering around and taking your time is shit. The feeling to paint a train was just amazing. To climb through this little hole to get in the yard, or whatever, and paint against this big bit of steel and keep an eye on the guard.

When people first started to hear about you what was the general reaction?

At that stage there wasn't a lot of reaction from others and we didn't have a lot of contact with other writers. We didn't like other writers. We wasn't writers, we was doing what we wanted - It wasn't a planned thing. We was vandals and we was out to do what we wanted to do and fuck everyone else.

You weren't bothered at all about the scene then?

The scenes are bullshit cos you're doing something against authority, yet these people who are in some so-called "scene" start giving you rules and regulations that you gotta act to and that's bullshit man cos that isn't graffiti.

## 'We wasn't writers, we was doing what we wanted - it wasn't a planned thing'

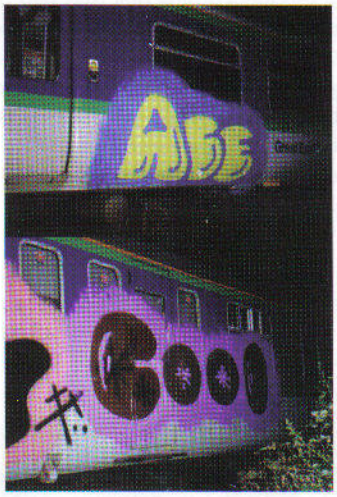
Was there a key moment in bringing about your change from doing the wall style you were doing to the style that you're now known for?

The thing that changed me was an interview in Xplicit Grafix with VINO. VINO was doing a style that was so fantastic it was unreal. It just looked so much better than those guys who were painting wildstyles. Reading the interview just reinforced what I already thought. And then after that some people would say it was a downhill slide to the complete destruction of what is a letter. You push yourself and wanna strip the letter down to minimilness. So people didn't like what we were doing - we didn't want people to like what we were doing. It was to fuck people off and the more people that were fucked off with what we were doing, the more we fucking liked it!

Looking back on it now, do you ever feel that you should have spent more time doing prettier, more intricate styles?
No, I would have just done more and bigger destructive shit - wholecars and panels. Things are different now because now days the paint is easily accessible and it's thick as fuck and you can do what you want. If we had had paint like that when we was doing what we was doing we'd have destroyed yards to destruction. We were doing five pieces a night with paint that was coming out skinny as fuck. If it was now we would have fucking destroyed it!

What do you say to the writers who say your stuff is a waste of space or time?
Most of the people saying that ain't fucking gone into a train yard and done a fucking train. When they go and do all the trains I've done they can come and talk to me about it. When they've gone into the yard and done their wildstyles or fancy pieces or whatever have you and as many as what I've done then they can come and talk to me about it, otherwise I've got no interest in their opinions, cos their opinions mean nothing - fuck 'em!

You talk about stripping letters down and simplifying. Is that why you chose to write words like COOL?
Absolutely. It got to a point where we'd stripped stuff down and then we thought how fucking far can we go? One day we was in the yard and had other stuff planned but we come up with ACE and COOL. Quality names, you know what I mean? How can you beat that man! That's like top quality graf names. We gave the flicks out and got a beating on the internet apparently that was indescribable. People said we were destroying graffiti and blah di blah di blah. Like we should be put on the cross and burned or something and we was just laughing. We didn't think it would work so well. It got to the point where it was just like 'let's see how pissed off we could get people'.
We stripped it down so badly that people hated what we were doing, but it's on a train not a wall. If we'd done it on a wall then people wouldn't give a shit, but it was on a train so no one could say nothing. They can comment but let's see them fucking beat it! I don't care, I'm only doing it to annoy ya! [Laughs] wankers!




Do you feel partly responsible for the current trend in simplistic pieces that we're seeing in London right now?
No, cos I just did what I did. It wasn't about trying to start a trend, it was about doing what we wanted to do and we didn't want to be like everyone else.

Do you find it ironic that the same guys that would have slated you are now busting out stripped-down letters?
Yes, because there's people out there who've over the years done traditional styles and then it becomes fashionable to be different or alternative or to do a simple style. People suddenly change but I've got more respect for the person that still does their wildstyles or traditional styles now cos they're doing what they wanna do instead of following fashion. It's madness to me! Surely doing graffiti is about doing what you want to do, not what is a fashion and if you're in a fashion then your pieces mean nothing. The term "European style" is bullshit cos whatever city you go to in Europe there's a certain city style - just like the DDS style in London. A "retro style" is for hanger-oners who are fashion victims - they don't know fuck all. This is about people with individual ideas who always had individual ideas and want to be individual - people who hate traditional society and hate government - it's about destroying trains and being yourself.

Did competition drive you to paint?
To a point, but we weren't trackside bombers. What we really wanted to do was to paint the train, not competing with everybody. The train was the most important thing.
You don't see any clouds on our pieces cos what's the point of putting a fucking cloud to hide up the train. The piece is on the train - the background is the train - that was always the point of what we did. The cloud in the old New York days was always to hide all the bombing and other shit behind. Well, there was rarely any bombing on the train I painted, if ever, so what's the point of fucking putting a massive fucking cloud all over the train so you can't see the fucking train.

There's a time when you and DODO moved to painting a lot of backjumps - was that the result of all your travels through Europe?

No, cos we never did anything like that [in Europe]. It was just to see what was possible in time - as in how quick could you do a piece on a train and make it look OK. It taught you to paint different and to learn how to paint again. You could do something in two minutes and get a runner and it would run when they didn't want you to have something running and you'd beat em! It was about possibilities: what you could do and how fast you could be. Breaking rules and traditions. Your meant to do bombing on backjumps in this country; well why can't you do a piece, who says you can't do a piece? It's like "that ain't a real piece cos you only done it in two minutes" - that's bullshit! If I can do a piece in only two minutes that's quality man cos I can get fucking hundreds of pieces out in the hour if I wanted to.

Let's go back to breaking rules - was doing no outline but instead just filling in backgrounds part of that?

No, no that's where everyone falls short, everyone presumed that was a background. That was an outline with a fucking "fuzzy" man. Graffiti terms 2004 exclusive to Bomb Alert Magazine: a "fuzzy" [Hysterical laughter]. It's an outline with a fuzzy!

What about writing over your piece?

People said when I was writing with them "Why are you dogging out your piece?" And I'd say "I'm not dogging out my piece, I'm adding to my piece!" I've seen other such scenarios in a KILO and SHOK wall piece I saw in HHC magazine, which was long after when I done it. I wouldn't say I was the first though - you never know when you're the first to do something. I just fancied doing it at the time. Some say it wrecks the piece - which you could say it does cos you can't see fuck all underneath it, but I like it so.

Your colours are quite different. How was that dictated?

The more I moved on I tried to used colours that you shouldn't use. Everyone wanted you to do pretty happy pieces but fuck that, let's try and clash colours and see how ugly we can make it. The trouble is every time you clash your colour it actually looks quite nice.

Has being involved in graffiti affected the way you see life, the way you are as a person?

I wouldn't say it's changed me - it's what I was and am now. But when I get on a train and see the thing's bombed to fuck I think it's fantastic. I'm a grown man and a vandal, a vandal 'til I die. Whether I vandalise or I don't it's what I am and I love destruction. It's not art, they don't commission you to do it. It ain't art, it ain't aerosol art - we're vandals and that's what we love.

What would happen if one day LU turned around and said people were allowed to paint trains?

That would be a fucking disgrace. You'd get all the fucking arseholes coming out that had done fuck all, all the time coming out to paint a fucking shitty "scene" on a train. Bollocks to 'em! That would never work, it's bullshit. If they gave permission to paint a fucking train I'd fucking make my best efforts to go and fucking bomb the fuck out of that train that those arseholes had painted. Cos they ain't writers, they're fucking toys.

Of all the places in the world that you've painted, what and where has been your best experience?
The place in Spain where I did a subway train. None of them spoke English. We jumped out of the back of a train at a station and we had to run down a tunnel while the trains were running. Couldn't see fuck all apart from a little dot at the end of the tunnel. You had to keep running down the tunnel until you bumped into someone when you reached the half way point and then we waited. A couple of them went to check the yard and came back and said it was cool. We climbed down a ladder back into a tunnel which we run down with trains running. Done a right down another tunnel which was carved out of a mountain and then there's just pure subway trains - a massive yard in a mountain with platforms and it was fucking quality! When we finish coming back onto the platform and there's girls there and shit and you're fucking covered in black. Rotten, but it was quality. In Spain they don't give a fuck - if there's a way to paint a train then they will paint a train. There's no rules or regulations about graf like in this fucking country - if there's a way of doing something they'll find it and do it and that's fucking graffiti man!

Going yard - rucksack or plastic bag?
Plastic bag.

How would you like to be remembered in your contribution to London graffiti?
I wouldn't like to be.

Why's that?
I don't give a fuck.

Not even style-wise?
Style-wise or nothing-wise I don't fucking care!
[Laughs all round]

We've seen pictures of some Russian writers who have really ripped off you and DODO's pieces. Would you care to say anything to them?
Yes, thank you. I'm honoured.

What would you be doing if you hadn't got into writing?
I'd have been a farmer!

Last comments?
Beware the wrath of the fuzzy!